Becoming a teacher in Australia: reflections on 'the resilience factor' in teacher professional development and teacher retention in the 1940s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century

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Abstract

Early career teacher retention and attrition rates have implications for the provision of quality education. Recent investigations of why some teachers survive and thrive while others leave the profession, disillusioned and/or burnt out, have identified 'resilience' as a key factor in teachers' personal and professional growth and commitment to a long-term career in education. This paper uses data from a demonstration lessons notebook compiled by a student teacher in 1942, accompanied by lesson commentary from her supervising teachers, a teachers' college handbook c.1943 and interviews with the compiler of the notebook to tell the story of an entrant into the teaching profession in the Australian state of Victoria in the 1940s. Her story is compared with findings from studies which focus on early career teachers in several Australian states in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The comparisons indicate that while resilience is a key factor in the personal and professional growth of teachers entering the profession sixty years apart, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are more differences than similarities in the nature of the challenges experienced by a novice teacher in the 1940s and several cohorts of early career teachers at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The paper concludes with some suggestions for nurturing teacher resilience and long-term commitment to the profession which could be considered by teacher educators and school leaders globally, with adaptations for addressing the specific challenges of the local.

Introduction

Internationally (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2003; Mason & Matas, 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2005)

and in South Africa (e.g. Deacon, 2012; Deacon, Robinson & Simkins, 2015) there are concerns about early career attrition in the teaching profession. Ewing and Manuel (2005), Tait (2008), Day, Edwards, Griffiths, & Gu (2011) and Cornu (2013) suggest that what they term 'resilience' is a key factor in differentiating teachers who survive and thrive from those who leave the classroom. According to Tait (2008, p.58), resilience is "a mode of interacting with events in the environment that is activated and nurtured in times of stress". She quotes Grotberg (1997) who defines resilience as "the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity" (Grotberg, 1997, p. 13, in Tait, 2008, p. 58). While acknowledging this definition of resilience, Day *et. al.* (2011) argue that, in education, there is increasing recognition that the nature of teaching and learning, and the contexts in which this takes place, demand what might be termed "everyday resilience". They also argue that "the capacity to be resilient is an important factor in teaching and teacher effectiveness over time; and that resilience can be developed" (Day *et. al.*, 2011, p.5). In their view, it can be developed because "resilience is not simply an individual trait, but a capacity that arises through interactions between people within organisational contexts" (2011, p. 3) – a view shared by Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters *et.al* (2010) and Pearce and Morrison (2011). If this is so, then resilience can be nurtured in initial teacher education programmes and through continuing professional development and teacher support networks.

Central to this paper is the story of a primary school teacher's childhood and adolescence, initial teacher education and induction into the profession in the Australian state of Victoria in the early 1940s. In reflecting on this story, I suggest that on the one hand, resilience is an important factor in the initial achievements of Iris K and in her lifelong commitment to education but on the other, that in some respects teaching in a rural primary school in the 1940s is likely to have been less stressful, and thus to have required less resilience, than teaching in either rural or urban contexts – in Australia and elsewhere – today. Iris K's story is compared with stories of beginning teachers in several Australian states in the first decades of the twenty-first century, as documented and reflected on by Ewing and Smith (2003); Ewing and Manuel (2005); Johnson *et al.*, (2010); Pearce and Morrison, (2011) and Le Cornu, (2013). Findings from the comparison are used to make suggestions for nurturing teacher resilience and long-term commitment to the profession which could be considered by teacher educators and school leaders globally, with adaptations for addressing the specific challenges of the local.

A note on methodology

The main sources of data for the case study of Iris K's "teacherly becoming" (Fataar, 2012) in the early 1940s are the Melbourne Teachers Training College Handbook (c.1943), a demonstration lessons notebook compiled in 1942 (Iris K's lesson plans and the comments of several supervising teachers), and transcriptions of a series of informal interviews with Iris K, aged 92 and still keenly interested in education. Connolly and Clandinin (1990) use the term *storytelling* for research participants' accounts of their experiences and *narrative* for the researcher's interpretive re-telling of participants' stories, with the latter process involving the researcher moving "out of the lived story to tell, with another "I", another kind of story" (Clandinin & Connolly, 1990, p. 10). As narrator, I use information from the interviews with Iris K to situate the textual analysis of the Handbook and demonstration lessons notebook and to inform the discussion of findings. The textual analysis consists of a critical discourse analysis of extracts from both the Handbook and the notebook, together with a content analysis of the curriculum for primary school teacher education. Findings from the case study are then compared and contrasted with those from recent studies of early career teachers in several Australian states (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Johnson *et al.*, (2010); Pearce and Morrison, (2011); Le Cornu, (2013).

Becoming a teacher in Victoria in the early 1940s

Fataar (2012) coined the term "teacherly becoming" to "call attention to the intersection between student learning and pedagogical and subject content knowledge as students proceed through a teacher education programme on the one hand, and how they navigate their own learning relative to their subjective becoming – their becoming teachers – on the other" (p. 40). He suggests that teacherly becoming involves navigation across three lived spaces: (i) "the complex performative space of higher education"; (ii) "the challenging environments of schools in which they do their teaching practice"; (iii) "the space of their lives, rooted in their biographies, which they transact across complex urban and rural spaces" (p. 38). To these could be added navigating the challenging environment of their first teaching appointment (Ewing & Smith, 2003). The case study of Iris K begins with a brief biographical account of her location in the three lived spaces of her formative years.

From primary school learner to qualified teacher: a brief biography of the formative years of Iris K

Iris K grew up on a farm from which she walked three miles to the local primary school. After completing Grade 8 she studied for the secondary school leaving certificate by correspondence, both at home and at her former primary school, where she was frequently assigned 'monitoring duties' which included disciplinary and teacher assistant activities such as listening to pupils while they read aloud. Literacy was valued in her home where there was a small selection of child and adult fiction, a set of encyclopaedias, a bible, hymn book and sheet music. Iris remembers being delighted to receive a Chambers dictionary for her tenth birthday. Her father, who was a member of the School Committee of the primary school, expected a high standard of handwriting from his four children. He also encouraged them to draw, using slates and chalk, and to 'play school' at home, with Iris as the eldest, usually in the role of teacher. A respected aunt, who worked as an unqualified teacher in another school in the area, was a frequent visitor.

In 1941 Iris K passed the secondary school leaving certificate examination and qualified to attend a teachers' college. However, many male and some female teachers had enlisted in the Australian armed forces and to alleviate the staffing crisis in schools, prospective student teachers were required to first "have at least one year's experience as a teacher, and be strongly recommended by their head teacher and an inspector of schools" (MTTC Handbook, c. 1942 p. 10). Thus in 1942, at the age of 18, Iris K left her home for the first time and travelled by bus to a small town, in another part of the state, which served a farming community. She had the name of a church minister on whose door she knocked, with no prior introduction, to request temporary accommodation – a request which fortunately was granted. She was assigned to teach a combined grade 3 and 4 class of 35 children under the supervision of the principal who taught in the adjacent classroom, and was paid a small salary for doing so. The lesson notes and the comments of supervising teachers discussed in this paper were written during this year.

Towards the end of the year a school inspector pronounced Iris K competent to manage a one teacher school on her own and arranged for her to shadow the teacher at another such school for three weeks prior to taking up her new appointment at the beginning of 1943. She became the sole teacher of 38 children in grades 1 to 8 and considers one of her achievements that year to

have been the success of the three adolescents in grade 8 who all passed the external merit certificate, with one of them obtaining a scholarship for secondary school studies. She acknowledges the key role of the senior pupils who, by performing a range of 'monitor duties', enabled her to focus on her multiple teaching and management tasks as 'head teacher'. Finally, in 1944 she was admitted to one year of full time study at Melbourne Teacher's College, graduating at the end of that year and taking up her first post as a qualified teacher at another rural, one teacher school at the beginning of 1945.

The student teacher/newly qualified teacher in the Australian state of Victoria in the early 1940s

All texts work to position their readers. In other words, they have designs on the reader or viewer (Janks, 2010). If the reader/viewer is aware of such positioning, he or she may choose to accept or contest the position constituted in the text. However, where there is an imbalance of power, as in the student teacher-lecturer or student teacher-supervising teacher relationship, acceptance is more likely than contestation. Several ideal student teacher/ newly qualified teacher subject positions identified in the MTTC Handbook and in the demonstration lessons notebook are presented and discussed below in relation to the concept of resilience.

A tradition-valuing conformist but also an independent pioneer

The foreword to the MTTC Handbook (c. 1943) begins with an unattributed quotation:

> 'Tis good to feel that we're a part
> Of one great glorious throng.

These lines are followed by the sentence "No student can enter into membership of a College in the fullest sense unless he understands something of its history" (MTTC Handbook. c. 1943, p. 1). The high modality of these introductory statements, together with the attitudes expressed in the adjectives "great" and "glorious", position student teachers to value tradition and belonging. The use of the exclusionary pronoun "he" is particularly ironic, given the largely female student body of the second world war years. The

handbook informs student teachers that "[E]fficiency in the course is judged by the standard reached in a number of spheres, namely: Academic Work. Practical teaching. Personal Qualities and General Attitude towards College Work" (MTTC Handbook, c. 1943, p. 11) and that they are expected to contribute to "College corporate life" by taking "an active part in games and social activities" (MTTC Handbook, c. 1943, p. 12).

This positioning of the student teacher as conforming to group values, having the appropriate attitudes to College Work (though these attitudes are not specified in the Handbook) and contributing to the well-being of a large community, contrasts with one of the stated aims of the course which was to prepare teachers for a posting to a small rural school (often with only one teacher) "so that the schools of the rural areas should be as well-served as the schools of the cities" (MTTC Handbook, c. 1943, p. 11). In such schools, with no professional community of peers available, initiative and self-reliance would arguably be of more value than conformity to group norms. In the case of Iris K, at the successful completion of her studies she was "instructed to take up duty as Temporary Head Teacher at School No. 2766 Arkona … for the purpose of Welfare Work in Rural Districts grouped under the leadership of the Head Teacher of School No. 1372 Dimboola" (Education Department Memorandum, 11 January 1945). With reference to one of the three aspects of teacherly becoming – the space of her life, rooted in her biography and transacted across complex urban and rural spaces (Fataar, 2012) – it could be argued that her experiences of 'playing school' at home, of studying the secondary school curriculum independently by correspondence, of being a monitor of younger learners' behaviour and a teacher's assistant at her former primary school, and of being the sole teacher at a rural school for the year prior to her year of study at MTC, are likely to have made a greater contribution to the formation of a self-reliant and resilient pedagogic habitus (Grenfell, 1996; Janks, 2010) than her year as a student teacher in which she was expected to conform to College norms.

A novice in regard to pedagogic strategies but a subject matter expert

Munby, Russell and Martin (2001) date the beginning of research interest in 'teacher knowledge' to the early 1980s, with Shulman's 1986 and 1987

publications giving impetus to this interest. Common to many recent conceptualisations of knowledge for teaching are the following:
(i) subject/disciplinary knowledge; (ii) pedagogic knowledge; (iii) knowledge of how learners learn; (iv) knowledge of the curriculum; (v) contextual knowledge; (vi) knowledge of self as learner and teacher. With the possible exception of the final category of 'self-knowledge', each of these categories is accommodated in Grossman's (1990) four domains of teacher knowledge, summarised by Rusznyak and Bertram:

> In Grossman's model, *knowledge of context* refers to the teacher's knowledge of the milieu in which she teaches, including the curriculum to be covered, the school policies and environment, and the learners' contexts. The second domain, *Content Knowledge*, comprises both the propositional and the procedural knowledge that the teacher has of the subject she is teaching. The domain of *General Pedagogic Knowledge* (GPK) refers to the teacher's knowledge of a range of lesson planning, classroom organisation and assessment strategies, as well as her ability to use these strategies successfully. GPK is the general knowledge that is shared by teachers irrespective of their subject or phase specialisations. The fourth domain, *Pedagogic Content Knowledge* (PCK), is understood as the teacher's knowledge of how to teach specific content by using conceptually sound explanations, analogies, models or activities that are both accessible to learners and address their common misunderstandings about the topic (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2015, p. 34; italics in the original).

While the designers of the curriculum for the MTTC Primary Teachers' Course did not have access to the scholarship on teacher knowledge which has accumulated since the 1980s, statements in the MTTC Handbook indicate that they had definite views on what should be foregrounded: "[T]he course is almost entirely a professional one, in that all the subjects relate to child study and the new courses which have recently been introduced into Primary Schools" (MTC handbook, c.1943, pp. 11–12). All courses were compulsory and an examination had to be passed in each one for a student to qualify as a primary school teacher. In Table 1 below, the foregrounding of 'Method' and the backgrounding of content knowledge courses related to school subjects (with the possible exception of the 'new' school subjects art and handwork and physical training) is striking. Student teachers are positioned as having acquired sufficient knowledge of history, geography, science, mathematics, English, health and music from their primary and secondary school studies, requiring only knowledge of how to teach these subjects and how to manage a rural school, supported by content knowledge in the field of Education Studies (History of Education; Principles of Education; Modern Developments in Education; Psychology).

Table 1:   Placement of compulsory courses for the Primary Teachers Course, Melbourne Teachers College 1943, into Grossman's four domains of teacher knowledge

Context knowledge	Content knowledge	General pedagogic knowledge	Pedagogic content knowledge
Rural school organisation	History of Education Principles of Education Modern Developments in Education Psychology Art and Handwork (?) Physical Training (?)	Infant School Method	Method of English Method of Social Studies Method of Science Method of Mathematics Method of Health Education Method of Music

Building on Morrow's (2007) work on the importance of systematic learning, Shalem (2010) argues that "a teacher's work is located within a knowledge field, within a specific discipline and so any choice that a teacher makes (professional authority) must attest to *that* field" (2010, p. 94; italics in the original). Even if the content of the curricula for secondary school subjects had been at an advanced level, without opportunities to deepen their understanding of a knowledge field or discipline (e.g. history or mathematics) during tertiary studies, it is unlikely that novice teachers could develop the disciplinary gaze necessary for making authoritative choices that would enable systematic, knowledge-focused learning for pupils. However, as will be demonstrated below, such learning appears not to have been central to the primary school curriculum of the time and thus limited subject knowledge is unlikely to have been a cause of stress for a beginning teacher.

A transmitter of 'facts' in most lessons; occasionally an enabler of learning

Although lesson preparation notes for the 93 demonstration lessons and the comments of supervising teachers on these lessons do not give a reader access to all the lessons taught or to the details of the curriculum on which they were based, at least two important 'patterns' can be identified in the notebook. Firstly, in the history, geography, nature study and health lessons there is little evidence of learners being apprenticed into the structure and discourse(s) of

the respective disciplines. Instead, they were presented with either 'stories' or collections of facts which they were usually expected to memorise. Secondly, and by contrast, in some of the English and arithmetic lessons, there were opportunities for learners to manipulate letters, words, grammatical categories, numbers and objects in constructing knowledge, although there was also considerable emphasis on rote learning in these subjects.

In her study of the curriculum used in Victorian primary schools from 1934 to 1952 Macknight (2005) notes the curriculum statement that "history should be a pageant rather than a philosophy" and observes that "[I]mplicitly this meant that historical truth would not be a central aim. Formal conceptual models were displaced by processions of larger than life events and characters" (2005, unpaginated). The examples of history lessons in the notebook illustrate this observation. Firstly, what was presented to learners as history was frequently based on Greek and Roman mythology. Secondly, learners did not engage with texts as historians but instead listened to or read 'stories', committed to memory the 'facts' in these stories on which they were asked questions and then performed the story or, as in the case of a lesson on the Trojan Horse, made a drawing of the wooden horse. The student teacher's preparation of content and of learner activities was applauded by the supervising teacher: "The teacher thoroughly revised the lesson on The Wooden Horse. The children answered questions well. As an application, the children coloured cut-outs of the wooden horse and pasted them in their books which were made to look very attractive. This was a very good lesson". Such comments positioned the student teacher as a successful interpreter of the Grade 3–4 history curriculum.

In the numerous examples of geography lessons, often the only identifiable connection with the discipline is the use of a map to situate the geographic region in which an animal, bird or reptile is located (in one lesson, Indian and African elephants, in another the grizzly bear, in two others, crocodiles and turtles). In each case learners were required to memorise facts about the creature on which the lesson focused and the lesson usually ended with a connection being made to a literary text (e.g. Kipling's story Elephant Child; the turtle soup story in Alice in Wonderland). As was the case for the history lessons, the supervising teachers commended the 'very good lessons' in which learner interest was aroused and sustained and thus the student teacher was positioned as successful. However, contemporary curriculum theorists would be concerned about the lack of disciplinary focus and the lack of concept development. For example, Shalem (2010) quotes Maton and

Muller's (2007) argument that if the criteria by which we organise and assess school knowledge (history, English, natural science) bear no relation to their parent knowledges (social sciences, humanities, physics) in the realm of production (the intellectual field), "then schooling will undermine its role as a relay of specialised knowledge" (Shalem, 2010, p. 96). It is likely that the lack of subject content courses in the Primary Teachers Course would have constrained student teachers' acquisition of the specialised knowledge which "enables a teacher to enrich the learning process with a broad range of illustrations, and to make connections between different concepts and ideas at different levels" (Hoadley, 2012, p. 134). However, as stated above, the primary school curriculum appeared not to require such connection-making and the emphasis on subject methodology in the teacher education curriculum is likely to have contributed to teacher confidence in lesson presentation and classroom management (although, in the case of Iris K and others of her generation, only after they had already gained considerable experience in the classroom.)

In contrast to the history and geography lessons, some of the English and arithmetic lessons offered learners opportunities to construct knowledge rather than only to memorise and recall. For example, the lesson plan for a 'composition lesson' indicates that learners were required to work with grammatical metalanguage to develop a vocabulary frame for the composition they were to write. Again, the supervising teacher approves: "This was an excellent vocabulary period… It was noticed that every child in the class worked hard to supply nouns, verbs and adjectives …" In this lesson, and in others in which learners constructed knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, procedures in arithmetic) the student teacher is likely to have been familiar with the disciplinary content from her own primary and secondary school studies.

A disciplinarian responsible for shaping children's bodies and minds

In *Literacy, Power and the Schooled Body*, Dixon argues that "for schooling to be effective, children need to be managed in particular ways, and to be taught to manage themselves in ways that are socially acceptable" (2011, p.63). Throughout the demonstration lessons notebook there is evidence that regulation of children's bodies and minds was prioritised in both the intended and enacted curriculum, particularly during handwriting, art, health, physical culture and music lessons. What is common to these lessons is the emphasis

on disciplining the body and conformity to what is positioned as 'correct'. While guiding learners in the development of legible handwriting and good posture can be considered legitimate goals of the primary school curriculum, the insistence in the handwriting lesson on one correct way of producing a letter and in another, the stigmatising of the camel whose hump serves a practical purpose, and people with humps, can be questioned. (See the Health lesson in the Appendix.) However, it is in the pastel drawing lesson that the enacted curriculum of the 1940s is most noticeably different from its twenty-first century counterparts. Instead of being encouraged to create their ideal or favourite cake using media of their choice, each child was expected to produce an identical, straight line-drawn cake on a plate under a heading and date in the pastel book. The lesson preparation notes include the following: "Teacher warns children to keep their vertical lines vertical. The cake must not be drawn too high in order that the candles may be drawn. Teacher supervises the drawing of the cake." The choice of the verb 'warns' and the prescriptive modal 'must not' indicate that any deviation from the instructions is unacceptable. The lack of freedom of expression in this lesson and the student teacher's close surveillance of the learners' drawings were endorsed and approved by the supervising teacher: "Preparation was well carried out and procedure followed the lines indicated. Children must learn to listen carefully when instructions are given. The drawings were generally well done, and the colour applied lightly. Supervision was thoroughly carried out. The period was very good." The lack of choice/creativity in the drawing lessons and the learners' apparent acceptance of the teacher's instructions for the production of 'sameness', are likely to have made classroom discipline easier than in contemporary classrooms in which individual responses may be both messy and noisy and thus more stressful for some early career teachers.

Rural primary school learners in the Australian state of Victoria in the early 1940s

Critical discourse and content analyses of the demonstration lesson notes and supervising teachers' comments on many of the lessons enabled identification of contrasting constructs of ideal rural primary school pupils in these lessons. These constructs are presented and discussed below in order to argue that for a beginning teacher from a similarly rural background to their own, these constructs are more likely to have provided reassurance and pleasure than uncertainty or anxiety.

Regulated and responsible but also fun-loving and imaginative

As indicated in the previous section, regulation of children's bodies and minds was one of the main goals of many of the lessons taught and one that was strongly endorsed by each of the supervising teachers. In addition to being positioned to accept the value of sitting, standing, writing, drawing and singing 'correctly', learners were positioned to behave responsibly from the time they started school. As explained by Iris K, a feature of the design of the one-roomed school was a covered entrance porch on which there was a peg for each child to hang his or her school bag, drinking mug and towel, and a basin for hand washing. Part of behaving responsibly involved being tidy and clean and looking after one's personal property. The porch was also the place to which learners were sent to 'cool off' when judged by the teacher to have misbehaved in class. Inside the classroom each learner had a wooden desk, with a lift-up top, in which to store textbooks, exercise books, a slate, a library book from the classroom library cupboard, pencils, a pen and blotting paper – all of which he or she was expected to take care of and use responsibly. Learners in the senior grades were expected to perform a range of maintenance (e.g. mixing ink and filling ink wells) and teaching assistant duties, according to a weekly 'duty roster'. Outside the classroom, learners in a particular grade were responsible for looking after a designated part of the school's vegetable and flower garden.

However, school life was not just about regulation and responsibility. Macknight (2005) notes that a teachers' guide to the 1934 version of the Victorian primary school curriculum still in use in the 1940s, stated that children "delight in speech and dramatic action, and in creating a miniature world from their own imagination. These activities are not aimless but are processes by which the child will grow" (no page reference). In the demonstration lessons notebook, there is evidence that opportunities for learners to engage in 'speech' or 'dramatic action' were either the focus of whole lessons or were the concluding revision activity. Two examples of dramatisation and storytelling are reproduced in the Appendix, together with the supervising teacher's comments.

In both the Primary Teachers Course and the primary school curriculum, oral presentations were highly valued. 'Voice training' was part of the student teachers' programme and clarity of speech and voice projection were assessed during the 'teaching rounds'. A feature of the one roomed rural school was a raised platform in front of the chalkboard, on which children stood to make speeches, read aloud, tell stories or act plays. In the student teacher's

planning notes for the drama and storytelling lessons included in the Appendix, as for all other lessons outlined in the notebook, there is no statement of intended learning outcomes. For the 'retelling a story' lesson, the supervising teacher's comments suggest that such a lesson should enable learners to practice voice production and appropriate expression and should enable the teacher to assess learners' use of logical connectors and to guide them in using these. In this lesson children have limited freedom but there is room for some creativity. In the second lesson, within the story frame, the lesson notes indicate more opportunities for learners to contribute their own ideas by 'suggesting conversations for various characters'. Although the supervising teacher does not comment on the learners' ideas', it appears from her brief comment that she approved of their 'realistic acting' and of 'acting freely'. While 'speech and drama' activities may have been a source of anxiety for some student teachers and early career teachers, for Iris K they were the highlight of her teaching day, given her confidence in public speaking and reading (activities in which she still participates at a business and professional women's club of which she remains an active member).

Some nature study lessons involved a 'nature ramble' during which learners were permitted some freedom as indicated in the Nature Ramble lesson plan included in the Appendix. The words used in the plan indicate that the nature ramble is another example of 'structured freedom': free discussion is 'allowed' but under teacher guidance. It appears that what the children 'learned' about cloud formation and rain was to be stored in their memories as there was no written activity, with the lesson ending in song and play.

Literate, numerate and orally confident, 'generally knowledgeable' on a range of topics but with limited foundations in specialised disciplinary knowledge

A review of the 93 lessons in the notebook indicates that primary school pupils were guided to become literate and numerate through lessons that focused on the development of knowledge and skills related to reading aloud, silent reading, oral re-telling or performing of stories and poems, legible hand writing, descriptive and narrative composition writing, number patterns and operations with numbers. They are likely to have accumulated what is often referred to as 'general knowledge' on a range of topics such as Greek and Roman mythology, animal characteristics and behaviours, the characteristics and uses of plants, the environment, and factors contributing to good health.

What is not evident is any opportunity to develop critical thinking or to establish the foundations of specialised knowledge in disciplines such as science, biology, history or geography that are required for systematic engagement with these subjects. As already noted, if the curriculum had required these, then a student teacher who had had somewhat limited opportunities to develop specialised knowledge, though she was an avid reader, might have been anxious about her limitations. In the absence of such a requirement, she could feel confident in the adequacy of her knowledge.

Socialised to value rural community life and to care for the environment

The rural school was a focal point of community life. While some children lived in the village or small town in which their school was located, the majority walked or rode a bicycle or horse from the family farm to the school. Families worked together on farming tasks that required additional labour (e.g. haymaking) and on community projects such as building maintenance at the school. Four important days in the school calendar were Bird Day on which the whole school walked in the area surrounding the school to record bird species; Arbor Day on which each child planted a tree in the school plantation, with some parents assisting the teacher; School Picnic Day on which parents joined their children and the teacher in a variety of outdoor games and sporting activities and the School 'Concert' at which children performed songs, poems and plays. Iris K recalls preparing for a special concert held in August 1945 to celebrate the ending of World War II. All of these events connected learners with their local community. What today would be called environmental awareness was given prominence in the formal and informal curriculum. In addition to the nature study lessons and nature rambles, children were assigned in rotation the duty of reading a thermometer and rain gauge and of recording these readings and, as indicated above, all were expected to care for a portion of the school garden.

Iris K, whose own primary school experiences had been similar to those of the children she was now teaching and who had helped care for plants at home from her pre-school years onwards, was in familiar, comfortable territory, unlike many of the newly qualified teachers whose experiences of entering the profession in Australia early in the twenty-first century are discussed by Ewing and Smith (2003), Ewing and Manuel (2005), Johnson *et. al* (2010), Pearce and Morrison (2011) and Le Cornu (2013).

Becoming a teacher in Australia in the early years of the twenty-first century

In twenty-first century Australia, an initial teacher education qualification may be achieved through either a four-year Bachelor of Education degree programme or through a degree followed by a one- or two-year post-graduate teacher education programme. As a result of following either route, new teachers are likely to feel confident of their subject knowledge (unless they have been asked to teach outside of their disciplinary areas) as was confirmed in Ewing and Smith's study in which early career teachers report that, regardless of programme type, respondents were generally satisfied with their pre-service preparation and felt "competent to begin teaching" (2003, p. 30) although concerned about their ability to cope with "assessment and reporting and classroom management" (2003, p. 30). Johnson *et. al* (2010) reported early career teachers' approval of their education theory courses, quoting one newly qualified teacher as saying that "Doing all of the learning theories and all that kind of stuff … puts you in the right headset" (early career teacher, quoted in Johnson *et. al*, 2010, p. 6, ellipsis in the original).

However, findings from questionnaire and interview data (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ewing and Manual, 2005); single interview data with multiple informants (Johnson *et al.*, 2010); data from multiple interviews with a single informant (Pearce and Morrison, 2011) and data from multiple interviews with multiple informants (Le Cornu, 2013) indicate that, in all of these studies, new teacher graduates identified similar challenges or issues – across a broad range of school and community contexts – for which they felt underprepared. Ewing and Smith categorise these issues as involving:

(i)   adjusting to the demands of teaching full time;
(ii)   negotiating colleague relationships;
(iii)   understanding classroom, school and community cultures;
(iv)   coping with self; finding a niche;
(v)   the idealism of the pre-service preparation (Ewing & Smith, 2003, p.17).

Using data from their studies of recently qualified teachers in Australia, Ewing and Smith (2003), Ewing and Manuel (2005), Johnson *et al.* (2010), Pearce and Morrison (2011) and Le Cornu (2013) all argue that positive 'relationships'/'interactions' with colleagues, learners, and learners' families

enable resilience in relation to each of the five issues. For Johnson *et al.* (2010) early career teacher (ECT) resilience is enhanced when:

"● **relationships** are developed that nurture a sense of belongingness and acknowledge the complex emotional needs of ECTs. Such relationships are based on respect, trust, care and integrity;

● positive **school cultures** are developed that actively promote collaborative relationships, professional learning communities, educative forms of leadership and dialogic decision making;

● ECTs successfully integrate personal, professional and structural discourses in ways that sustain both a coherent sense of personal identity and emerging teacher identity over time" (Johnson *et al.*, 2010, p. 14, bold type and bullets in the original).

With reference to relationships and school cultures, many of the stories of ETCs in twenty-first century Australian schools included in the studies listed above, attest to the kinds of stressful experiences illustrated in these three examples:

(i)   "The teachers who work alongside Norah do not share many of her views about teaching and learning, such as the value of play in the curriculum. This has made her feel rather alone in the school, as she has no-one to talk to about how to develop as the kind of teacher she would like to become" (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 52, reporting their case study of Norah, an early career primary school teacher).

(ii) "I had known teaching would be professionally tough. I hadn't thought much about how your self-esteem, your self-worth and your sense of self is invested in your vision of yourself as a teacher. I loved my years of undergraduate study – I was an able student, I worked hard and this hard work was always rewarded with high grades. … On reflection, I see that my success was grounded in a traditionalist conception of education …. The move to classroom teacher was therefore a fracturing experience … " (Ewing & Smith, 2003, p. 19, ellipsis in the original).

(iii) "I wasn't prepared for how much of me, how much of myself, would be embedded in these relationships and how difficult classroom and school cultures would be to negotiate. How do you work in a school that

professes an ethos of care and attacks those who don't fit their mould?" (Early career secondary teacher, quoted in Ewing & Manuel, 2005, p. 9).

Le Cornu (2013) reports that one of the key findings from interviews with 60 early career teachers and with the principals of the schools in which they taught, is that their relationship with themselves ("how comfortable they felt as a person and in their role of teacher" p. 6), contributed to their resilience: "where the early career teachers demonstrated a high level of personal awareness, viewed themselves as learners, and were reflexive, their resilience appeared to be enhanced. This had a positive effect on their self-confidence and their sense of personal agency" (Le Cornu, 2013, p. 6). From their in-depth study of Norah as a beginner teacher, Pearce and Morrison conclude that "understanding how early career teachers shape their new professional identities while at the same time enabling personal selves to persist and remain coherent would seem to be an important part of understanding resilience" (2011, p. 49). In investigating the kinds of professional support that best assist early career teachers, the research reported by Le Cornu (2013) found that early career teachers flourished when they were viewed as having a contribution to make to the learning of their colleagues and when they were invited to "participate in reciprocal learning relationships" (p.11). This finding is similar to that reported in Day *et al*.: "resilience emerges in interactions in workplaces where practitioners are taken seriously and able to take forward their intentions and exercise professional agency in their day to day decisions" (2011, pp. 6–7).

The resilience factor: past and present

There can be little doubt that to begin teaching all subjects across several grades, without any formal teacher education qualification, as Iris K did at the age of 18 in 1942, to have sole responsibility for the education of children across eight grades in 1943 and again in 1945 after her year at teachers' college, would have required considerable resilience. However, I suggest that in some respects Iris K faced fewer 'stress factors' than today's early career teachers.

With reference to the five broad issues identified by Ewing and Smith as the most challenging for today's ETCs, Iris K was used to teaching full time from

her first days in the classroom and she was teaching a curriculum which had not changed since her own primary school days so that 'adjusting to teaching full time' would not have been as great a challenge for her as for many of today's ETCs. Although she worked with colleagues in her first year of full time teaching as an unqualified teacher and during the 'teaching rounds' that formed part of her year at teachers' college, for one year prior to qualification and for her first appointment as a qualified teacher, she had no colleagues with whom to 'negotiate relationships'. While the authors of each of the recent studies of ETCs discussed in this paper argue for the value of supportive professional and personal relationships, they also recognise the likely negative consequences of unsupportive relationships.

The third issue identified by Ewing and Smith, 'understanding classroom, school and community cultures', is a challenge likely to be experienced by any teachers who begin their careers in unfamiliar contexts. This was not the case for Iris K for whom there was continuity between her own primary schooling in a one-room school, in a close-knit farming community and her first experiences of teaching in similar schools and communities, made even closer as they faced together the challenges of a country at war.

Some of the early career teachers interviewed in recent studies, spoke of being underprepared for the challenges of classroom management and of the negative consequences for their confidence in themselves as teachers: "I had two kids who just screamed at me across the room … nothing worked … no matter how hard I tried … I hit rock bottom" (early career teacher quoted in Le Cornu, 2013, p. 4; ellipsis in the original). According to Iris K, discipline was seldom an issue. As described in an earlier section of the paper, learners were positioned to behave responsibly from the time they started school – a positioning that was generally accepted, with only occasional 'time outs' on the school porch required for some.

The contrast between the 'ideal' classroom world of their initial teacher education courses and the reality experienced in their first teaching appointment was an issue raised by ETCs in each of the recent studies. These graduates have had far more opportunities to develop in-depth subject knowledge and to develop theorised pedagogic content knowledge than could possibly have been the case for Iris K during her one-year, methodology-dominated teacher education programme. As a result, they are likely to be more aware of possibilities for creative engagement with learners and learning

than was Iris K but also more likely to become frustrated if school and classroom cultures make it difficult to teach as they would wish to do.

Johnson *et al*. (2010), Pearce and Morrison (2011) and Le Cornu (2013) all identify 'relationship with self' or 'feeling comfortable as a person and in their role as teacher' (Le Cornu, 2013, p. 6) as important for teacher resilience. For Iris K, playing school at home, assisting her former primary school teacher with teaching assistant duties during her teenage years, taking on the responsibility of head (and only) teacher in a supportive community context all contributed to growing self-confidence and personal agency as the teacher she wished to be. For many student and early career teachers today, family, school and community contexts and school curricula are likely to be more complex and demanding than was the case in a rural community in the 1940s and thus the challenges of constructing their personal and professional identities are arguably greater than in the past.

Nurturing resilience: roles for teacher educators, school leaders and teaching colleagues

In *Beyond Survival,* Day et. al. (2011) argue that resilience can be fostered in initial teacher education programmes, through professional development opportunities within and across schools and through teacher support networks. In this final section of the paper their suggestions, together with those of other contributors to the *Beyond Survival* booklet (Smethem & Hood, 2011; Handscomb, 2011) and suggestions from Ewing and Smith (2003) and Ewing and Manuel (2005), are outlined and related to the studies discussed above.

Nurturing resilience in initial teacher education programmes

Findings from the study discussed by Ewing and Smith (2003) indicate that while generally satisfied with their pre-service teacher education programmes, early career teachers in the Australian state of New South Wales would have liked more emphasis on classroom/student management and on assessment and reporting and also more opportunities to gain 'professional experience' – all of these to enable them to feel more confident in their professional role. However, there was no indication in the responses of these novice teachers

that they wanted less of what had been included in their curriculum. As pointed out by Rusznyak (2015), given the "multitude of concepts and techniques that could be important for teachers to learn during their initial teacher education", teacher educators need to make "rational knowledge selections" (2015, p. 7). In making these selections, teacher educators could include knowledge selections and ways of interacting with student teachers that are likely to nurture resilience. For example, Smethem and Hood (2011), in focusing on the teaching practicum in initial teacher education, suggest that student teachers are likely to develop resilience if teacher educators establish realistic expectations of the roles and responsibilities of student teachers while at the same time devising challenging targets for development, assisting them to establish collaborative rather than individualistic solutions to the challenges they experience, and working with their mentors in schools to "devise supportive yet challenging ways of giving feedback and advice" (2011, p. 10).

Nurturing resilience in the first years of teaching

By the time she qualified as a teacher, Iris K had accumulated extensive classroom teaching and school leadership experience. This is not the case for some early career teachers today – particularly those who study for a one year post-graduate teaching qualification after obtaining a degree. According to Ewing and Manuel, such teachers are much more likely to develop resilience and to remain in the profession if they receive "supportive induction into their *specific* school context; its conditions, culture and ethos, as well as the teaching profession more broadly" (2005, p. 12; italics in the original). One of the findings of Johnson *et.al*'s investigation into conditions that support ETC resilience in Australian schools is that schools that operate as professional learning communities promote a sense of "belongingness and social competence" while providing both formal and induction opportunities (2010, p. 4). In similar vein, Handscomb (2011) reports findings from a study in the United Kingdom in which ETCs became more resilient as a result of being given more rather than less responsibility, being supported in exercising this responsibility and being acknowledged for the contribution they were making to the school. A similar suggestion is made by Le Cornu (2013) who notes that the early career teachers in the study on which she reports "flourished when they were able to participate in relationships which recognised them as new professionals who had something to offer the

teaching profession" and who were "viewed as active participants in their own learning as well as being able to make a contribution to others' learning" (2013, p. 11). However, Ewing and Smith (2003) and Ewing and Manuel (2005) note that some of the ETCs in their respective studies were left to 'sink or swim' receiving "inadequate or unmanaged induction" (Ewing & Smith, 2003, p. 26) with their voices not heard (Ewing & Manuel, 2005, p. 13). These authors suggest that "[P]roviding meaningful contexts, on a regular basis, for early career teachers to connect with other staff, to express concerns, and to contribute ideas and perspectives would go some way towards offsetting the isolation and professional disconnectedness that can lead to attrition" (Ewing & Manuel, 2005, p. 13).

A concluding comment

Although this paper has focused on initial teacher education and early career teaching, past and present, in Australia, with some references also to the United Kingdom, I hope that its discussion of resilience, possible reasons for teacher resilience or lack of resilience in different times and places, and suggestions for ways of fostering resilience in initial teacher education programmes and in schools, may encourage teacher educators and school leaders to think about contextually appropriate ways of supporting student teachers and newly qualified teachers to become resilient members of the teaching profession.

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Appendix

Two pages from the demonstration lessons notebook: Health lesson for grades 3–4 on the topic 'Good Posture'
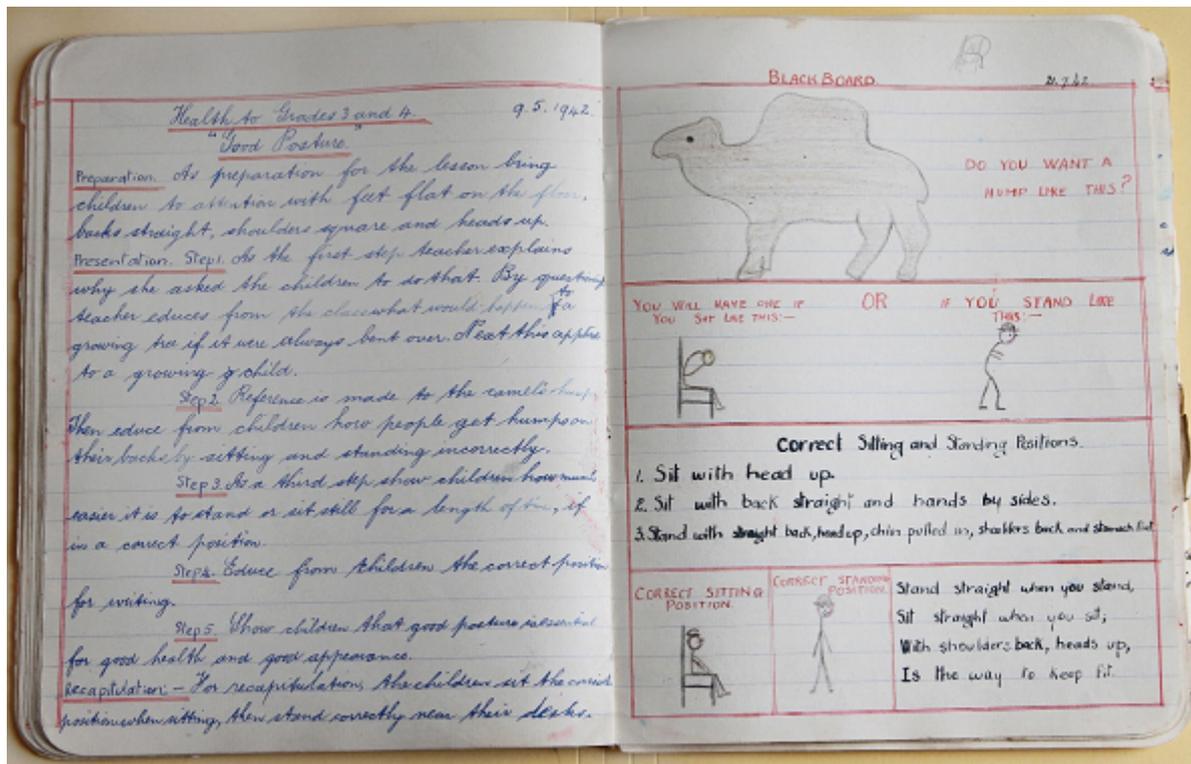
Other examples of lessons, transcribed verbatim from the demonstration lessons notebook

Retelling a story. The Town Band   Grades 1-2   9-6-42

Procedure. A member of the class can come out to the front and begin telling the story. Teacher helps child and other members of the class are invited to volunteer assistance. Other individuals are asked to continue the story. When the part of the story, where the animals call out, arrives, each member of the class becomes a certain one of the animals and calls out the sound of that animal.

A member of the class completes the story. In any remaining time, the children can draw some of the members of the town band.

Supervising teacher's comments: Retelling is a test of a child's vocabulary. Quietly check the 'ands', giving the child other words each time – 'so', 'then', 'at last'. Encourage good voices and expressive tones.

Dramatization of The Three Little Pigs   Grades 1-2   10-6-42

Step 1. Teacher chooses members of the class to act various parts - three children as the three pigs, someone as Mother, three others as the owners of the straw, sticks and bricks respectively, and some else as the Wolf.

Step 2. The wolf goes to a certain place in the room away from all the other actors. The Mother Pig and the first Little Pig take their places together. She farewells him and he meets a man with some straw …

Step 3. The dramatization of the story is continued. Other members of the class help in the dramatization by suggesting conversations for the various characters. They may perhaps join in the chorus – "No, no, no, by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin … so that all can take part.

Supervising teacher's comment: Children's appreciation of the most realistic acting, encourages others to act more freely.

Nature Ramble   11-6-1942

Week's Observations: wood grub brought by a member of the class; earthworms noticed after a fall of rain; rain clouds present frequently; rain has fallen. Cootamundra wattle has been noticed in bud.

Nature Ramble   As this is the children's ramble they are allowed to discuss freely, under teacher's guidance, the various specimens of Nature Study found and seen during the ramble. Include a discussion about clouds and the formation of rain which has fallen during the week. To complete the discussion, children can sing 'Down Came the Raindrops' before having a game in the open air.

(Lesson plan signed by supervising teacher but no comment made.)

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